

# MRS. STEWART IS SPEAKER AT JOINT ASSEMBLY SESSION

President of the Illiteracy  
Commission Delivers an  
Able Address to Both  
Houses at Capitol

ASKS APPROPRIATION  
TO CARRY ON WORK

Lieutenant Governor Intro-  
duces Her and Pays Her  
High Tribute

(By J. Sherman Porter.)

FRANKFORT, Ky., Feb. 17.—Mrs. Cora Wilson Stewart, founder of the moonlight schools, head of the Kentucky Illiteracy Commission, devoted patriot and apostle of the "No Illiteracy in Kentucky in 1920" movement, delivered the ablest and most eloquent address of the present session of the Legislature to a joint meeting of the Senate and House in the hall of the House of Representatives this afternoon in appealing for an appropriation for the carrying on of her work.

Mrs. Stewart was escorted to the hall by a committee composed of Representatives W. C. G. Hobbs, of Lexington; W. J. McMurry, of Hickman; David J. Howard, of Versailles, and her brother, former Representative Bun Wilson, of Morehead, appointed by Speaker H. C. Duffy, and Senator Thomas A. Combs, of Fayette; Representative E. D. Stone, of Crittenden, and John W. Snider, of Spencer. She was introduced by Lieutenant Governor James D. Black in a brief but impressive address in which he paid her high tribute for her devotion to her work and the value of the work itself.

"We are met in this hall at this hour," he said, "to hear from a woman who has won distinction in her own state and in the country because of the splendid work in which she is engaged and in which she has been engaged for some time. Every Kentuckian is interested in the cause of education and every Kentuckian ought to be interested in the cause of education.

"The work in which this splendid lady is engaged is a new one for this part of the country if not for the whole country. Its purpose is to lift the heavy load of adversity arising from the lack of education from those who have not enjoyed the privileges vouchsafed to others.

"Her name is a household word in every home in our great and beloved state. It is not my purpose to delay the business of this hour by entering into any extended address. It is my pleasure, as well as an honor which I appreciate, to introduce this good woman to the General Assembly of Kentucky. Gentlemen, Mrs. Cora Wilson Stewart."

No Attack on Duffy.

Mrs. Stewart, in beginning her address said it had been rumored that she had intended to attack John C. Duffy, special assistant to the Attorney General, whose report in her office sometime ago had caused some feeling among her friends. But she assured that it was not her purpose to "attack anybody for making a mistake." She praised the work of Mr. Duffy in the General Assembly and spoke so highly of that gentleman that not even his most intimate friend would have found fault with what she had to say of him. She went on to declare that it was a time for serious thought and for work and not for re-creation.

Mrs. Stewart said that illiteracy was not confined to any one section of the state. It was in the mountains, the Blue Grass, the pennyrile, the purchase. It could be found in the metropolis of Louisville, in the center of learning of the state, Lexington. It was a statewide fight that had to be made to root it out.

She said that the census of 1910 showed that the number of illiterates in Kentucky totalled 208,084 and gave some idea of the work that had been done as a start to overcoming that great handicap to the progress of the state.

Mrs. Stewart told of Andrew Jackson learning to read and write through the teaching of his wife after he had reached manhood's estate and said that indicated that "men were as bright as women." She told of Eve's yearning for knowledge in the Garden of Eden and of her willingness to part that knowledge to Adam and declared that "even Paradise was a prosaic place without knowledge." She said that she had always been able to consider the fall of Adam and Eve with leniency when she remembered that it was the "thirst for knowledge that caused it."

Quotes Thomas Jefferson.

Mrs. Stewart quoted Thomas Jefferson when she said, when she thought of the long indifference of the people of Kentucky to this matter, "I tremble when I remember that God is just." She told how the idea of teaching adults to read had originated in the charges filed against a trustee while she was superintendent of schools of

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Rowan County. He was accused of inability to read and write and his lawyer had advised him to "learn while the case was pending." Under the direction of one of the teachers the trustee had studied diligently and when the time for trial came before Mrs. Stewart he was able to confound the prosecution by being able to read from the school laws of the State and to write at the dictation of some of those present.

Kentucky, Mrs. Stewart said, was the first state to attack illiteracy. Alabama had followed her example. Results worth while had been reported from North Carolina and South Carolina. A bill was pending in the Mississippi legislature, she said, for an appropriation and in Congress another measure carrying an appropriation of a million dollars was being discussed, all aimed at the course of illiteracy.

"We have started a fight in Kentucky," she declared, "that will embroil the whole nation. The Illiteracy Commission is now asking the support of the state. This movement has grown too large and is too important to the welfare of the state for it longer to remain the stepchild of the state."

## Urges Support of Bills.

She urged the members of both Houses to support House Bill 312 and Senate Bill 200. She declared the proposition for such an appropriation was politically wise, economically safe and manifestly just and that she wanted to say in answer to those who said the state could not afford it:

"The state cannot afford not to afford it."

She declared the \$20,000 asked of the state was "a mere pittance" compared to the time devoted to the movement by the "consecrated teachers of Kentucky."

"It is not only our duty to meet this situation," she said, "but it is our high and holy privilege as well."

Mrs. Stewart was given an ovation at the close of her address and was heard with the closest attention throughout. After the joint assembly had adjourned Representative Reuben Hutchcraft moved to call up the illiteracy appropriation and place it upon its passage but as it was near the house of adjournment a motion to adjourn carried. There is not the least doubt of the passage of the bill in both Houses.

## Mrs. Stewart's Peroration.

In closing her address, Mrs. Stewart said:

"We often say that we would not call back the dead and when I think of my angel mother, who died so triumphantly with the words on her lips, 'O, this heavenly day,' and of my infant son, who had he lived to manhood's estate or to ripe old age, and suffered all of life's sorrows could have gained no more than he now enjoys, I have never thought that for even a mother's love or a baby's kiss I would call back my sainted dead. But today I could almost call back those matchless and indomitable of Kentuckians gone before to help liberate Kentucky's illiterates.

"I would call back Daniel Boone and let him but tell of the thrill to a hunter's heart as he was able to carve on a tree in letters crude the record of a hunter's victory. I would call back Theodore O'Hara and let him write a requiem to the blighted living to match his requiem to the beloved dead. I would call back Joel T. Hart and let him chisel the statue of illiteracy, piteous and blinded, pleading for her mental sight. I would touch the statue of William Goebel down yonder and bring it to life long enough for him to repeat those immortal words: 'Tell my friends to be brave and fearless and loyal to the great common people,' and I would make the lips of the Lincoln monument down in the rotunda to open long enough to speak just one word—the thing for which that rugged life was lived and for which that heroic figure stood—'emancipation.' If these and all the others of Kentucky's illustrious dead could speak to your souls a message they would say with one voice: 'Wipe out Kentucky's illiteracy; wipe it out; wipe it out.'"

## Galleries and Floor Crowded.

The galleries and the floor were

crowded and some of the most prominent women in the state were present, including Mrs. Thomas Jefferson Smith, president of the Kentucky Equal Rights Association; Mrs. Morris Bartlett, president of the Kentucky Federation of Women's Clubs; Mrs. H. D. Ripy, secretary of the federation; Mrs. Mattie Reed, professor of English in the Western Kentucky State Normal School at Bowling Green; Mrs. Thomas A. Combs and Mrs. Nannie G. Faulconer, of Lexington. Delegations also attended from Harlan, Rowan, Jefferson and Owen counties and from the Eastern Kentucky State Normal.

Sheriff Arthur Hogge, of Morehead; Bun Wilson, brother of Mrs. Stewart, of Morehead; Sheriff Manley, of Bath County; Superintendent of Schools Jennie Higgins, of Garrard County; Superintendent Ora Adams, of Mercer County; Superintendent J. A. Lanter, of Clark County; Superintendent O. V. Jones, of Owen County; Superintendent Ella Lewis, of Grayson County, and the Frankfort Woman's Club, were present. Many of the men and women wore printed placards on which was printed the legend:

"Everybody in Kentucky must read and write."

The members of the Illiteracy Commission, of which Mrs. Stewart is president, also attended. They are: President J. G. Crabbe, of the Eastern Kentucky State Normal; President H. H. Cherry, of the Western Normal; State Superintendent V. O. Gilbert and Miss Ella Lewis, of Grayson County.